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24 October 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Morning Meeting of 24 October 1969

In response to the Director's question DD/P, Carver, and the DD/I briefed on favorable reaction to last evening's session with the White House Fellows. The Director expressed his appreciation.

DD/I noted that he, Carver, [] met with Larry Lynn at lunch yesterday and determined his high interest in seeking to use his experience with Verification as a model for unraveling the numbers problem in Vietnam.

DD/I briefed on a preliminary assessment of the most recent GIANT SCALE mission over North Korea, noting that the quality of coverage is the best to date and yielded the report in today's publications that the Soviets have supplied a tactical rocket system to Pyongyang.

Godfrey briefed on the continuing crisis situation in Lebanon.



D/ONE commented that their sessions with PFIAB had gone well and mostly concerned NIE 11-8 and NIE 11-3. He briefly noted the differences of opinion, however, with respect to the dialogue that followed pertaining to facts vs. intentions as the principal function of an Estimate.

D/ONE reported that USIA would like a copy of NIE 11-11-69, Soviet Chemical and Biological Warfare Capabilities. The Director concurred.

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Carver noted that Vietnam was relatively quiet and commented that he spent most of his time with PFIAB discussing the NVN political situation.

Maury mentioned that Wilfred Rommel had no problem with our draft legislation.

In response to the Director's questions Maury stated that we definitely have a scheduled commitment to meet with the House CIA Appropriations Subcommittee on 29 October but that as yet we do not know whether it is to be a budget hearing or some other requirement. The Director asked that, if Maury is unable to clarify this matter promptly with Bob Michaels, he call the Chairman directly.

Houston recalled that on 6 October he met with Reverend Lindstrom, Charles Bennett, and James Stewart and that he now has a letter from Mr. Stewart. Stewart's letter expresses surprise that there was no press coverage of this matter, since they talked with the press following the meeting. Houston added that he does not intend to reply to the letter.

DD/P briefed on recently received information [] which notes that those who hold power [] are perhaps younger officers who were trained in the Soviet Union.

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The Director called [] attention to the item in today's Washington Post attributed to an Australian journalist that ninety Soviets were killed in a battle on the Ussuri River. [] remarked that the figure is much too high and speculated that more Chinese than Soviets would have been killed.

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The Director called attention to press reports about the British move from shilling to decimal coinage. [] noted that this change-over will not be completed until 1971, and others described the confusion which will be created in the meantime.

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The Director noted that he has unexpectedly been asked to attend a meeting at the White House today on the heroin problem.

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K1 *The Director asked [] to update a memorandum describing our knowledge of ChiCom road building in Laos. In this connection, he pointed to State's message to Embassy, Vientiane.

The Director briefed on efforts under way to declassify former President Johnson's papers. He noted that General Schulz is in charge of this effort, complimented [] on the fine work he has done to date, and noted that papers pertaining to the Dominican Republic will receive special attention. The Director added his understanding that the LBJ papers pertaining to our interests will not be declassified.

Goodwin reported that Tad Szulc of the New York Times is doing a piece on the first-year anniversary of the cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam and has requested a briefing. The Director disapproved.

[]

L. K. White

*Extracted and sent to action officer

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90 Soviets Said to Die on Border

An Australian free-lance journalist has reported that two Russian soldiers traveling with him on the Trans-Siberian railway told him of a battle on the Ussuri River in which more than 90 Russians died and an estimated 40 Chinese were killed or wounded.

Neither the Soviet Union nor China has reported any such casualties in their border clashes this year.

The journalist, Andrew Clark, in an article written for The Manchester Guardian, said an account of the battle was first given by an officer who came with a colleague to Clark's apartment on the train.

The officer, Clark reported, said he had been on duty on a gunboat in the Ussuri River when it and others became involved in a fight with Chinese frontier troops. He said more than 90 Russian soldiers were killed and, by his estimate, 40 Chinese fell before their force was repulsed.

The Ussuri delineates part of the Soviet Union's eastern border with China. Last March the river was the site of the first reported large battle between China and the Soviet Union in the current border quarrel. Later clashes on the river were reported. High-ranking delegations from both countries are meeting in Peking in an attempt to settle the matter.

The officer told Clark the fight took place a few days before their conversation, which would indicate it occurred around the first of this month.

Clark reported that a similar account of the fighting was given him by a Russian private two days after his meeting with the officer.

The talks took place after the train passed through the important provincial city of Khabarovsk, 35 miles north of the border in the Far East. Many Russian soldiers boarded the train in Khabarovsk on their way to reassignment in western Russia after border

duty, Clark reported. Their superior officers tried to keep them from conversing with the seven foreigners on the train.

Clark, who completed the trip two weeks ago, gave this account of the earlier part of the trip:

From Nakhodka, on the east coast, to Irkutsk in central Siberia there is evidence that Soviet military planners are preparing for any form of attack from China, and for counter-thrusts by their own forces. Russia is using the Trans-Siberian Railway, which still remains the only reliable form of transport through the vast and often frozen region, for a massive deployment of troops and heavy artillery.

Several trains that passed ours on the 5,800-mile route contained endless rows of what appeared to be anti-aircraft guns; others had armored cars and jeeps.

Our train would often be

held up for more than an hour at a siding while several military trains passed. At all the 82 scheduled stops the train made I saw indications of not only a military presence but also preparations for a further buildup of men and equipment. This was most obvious at Khabarovsk.

When I got off the train there was a huge convoy of trucks assembled outside the station. The trucks were said to contain equipment that would be used by backup troops.